

House OKs Helping Medicaid Offer Maternity Services (MOMS) Act of 2019 Introduced by Rep. Robin Kelly

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the U.S. House of Representative Committee on Energy and Commerce approved bipartisan legislation aimed at reducing and ending America’s growing maternal mortality crisis.

The *Helping Medicaid Offer Maternity Services (MOMS) Act of 2019* was introduced by Rep. Robin Kelly, chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust and co-led by Representatives Michael Burgess, MD (R-TX), Buddy Carter (R-GA), Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA), Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) and Lauren Underwood (D-IL).

Ranking Member Greg Walden (R-OR) and Representatives Eliot Engel (D-NY) and Jahana Hayes (D-CT) have also co-sponsored the bill.

Today, more than half of new moms are covered by Medicaid when they give birth but many lose Medicaid coverage just 60 days after giving birth. There is clear data showing 70 percent of new moms will have at least one health complication within a year of giving birth. The bipartisan *Helping MOMS Act* would incentivize states to extend Medicaid coverage for new moms through the entire postpartum period. The measure would provide a 5 percent enhanced Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentages (FMAP) to incentivize extension.

“Incentivizing postpartum Medicaid expansion is a critical first step in preventing maternal deaths by ensuring new moms can see their doctor. I’m proud that my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, came together to put an end to the sad reality of

American moms dying while growing their families,” said Congresswoman Robin Kelly. “We can’t allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good. This is a good, bipartisan first step, but it must be the first of many.”

“The *Helping MOMS Act* is a step in the right direction and builds upon the commitment the Energy and Commerce Committee made to address maternal mortality in the 115th Congress,” Congressman Burgess said. “This bill will provide states the option to extend continuous Medicaid coverage for pregnant and postpartum mothers for 12 months after giving birth. Currently, most states provide Medicaid coverage for only 60-days postpartum, but there is an expanding volume of literature pointing to the benefits of having Medicaid coverage for one year postpartum. With more than 40 percent of births in the United States covered by Medicaid, H.R. 4996 could have quite an impact on addressing rates of maternal mortality and morbidity.”

“Black, Latinx, and Medicaid-enrolled women are most likely to want the support of a doula during pregnancy, but less likely to have access to it,” said Congresswoman Pressley. “Maternal justice is about access. It’s about equity. And it’s about ensuring that every woman is listened to and treated with dignity and respect during childbirth. The *Helping MOMS Act* of 2019 would do just that by promoting a holistic approach to maternal care that recognizes current disparities in healthcare and critical environmental factors impacting marginalized communities.”

“Every woman who’s had a baby knows the postpartum period can be the most difficult. In the United States, women are more likely to die of pregnancy-related conditions following the birth of their child than during pregnancy and yet, for many women, their healthcare coverage ends just sixty days after giving birth. If we’re going to get serious about reversing the maternal death rate in America, we need to ensure that women’s access to treatment isn’t abruptly cut off during this vulnerable time, and that’s what the *Helping MOMS Act* will do. In my ongoing effort to put an end to the maternal mortality crisis, I’m proud to help lead this bipartisan legislation that will increase new mothers’ access to life-saving care,” said Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler.

“The bipartisan *Helping MOMS Act* is a historic step toward ensuring every mother in America has health coverage after giving birth, which will save lives and improve maternal outcomes,” said co-founder and co-chair of the Black Maternal Health Caucus, Congresswoman Lauren Underwood. “I am grateful to the countless organizations who work to improve the health of women and end intolerable health disparities: they are indispensable to ensuring this legislation results in improved outcomes for women – and Black women in particular. I look forward to continuing to work with them.”

“Tragically, Georgia has the highest rate of maternal mortality in the nation,” said Congressman Carter. “This is absolutely unacceptable and something must be done.

That is why I have been meeting with health professionals and experts in the First District to create solutions. Many of these experts told me that increasing access to care after delivery will have significant benefits for mothers. I'm very glad this legislation was approved today as it will work to help ensure every mother has the access to care they need."

In recent years, the U.S. has made headlines for its disturbing and growing rate of maternal mortality. It was more dangerous to have a baby in 2018 than it was in 1985. According to the CDC, 700-900 American moms lose their lives every year to pregnancy or birth-related complications. According to statistics compiled by American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), more than half of these tragic deaths are entirely preventable.

The *Helping MOMS Act* has been endorsed by many leading health and family advocates including:

Black Mamas Matter Alliance (BMMA),

Black Women's Health Imperative,

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG),

American Medical Association (AMA),

National Perinatal Task Force,

March of Dimes,

National Birth Equity Collaborative,

Associations Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP),

Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM),

Preeclampsia Foundation,

WomenHeart,

Medicaid Health Plans of America (MHPA),

Blue Cross Blue Shield Association,

America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP),

Shades of Blue Project,

Illinois Health and Hospital Association,

Every Mother Counts,

2020 Mom,

Mom Congress,

Northwestern Medicine,

First Focus Campaign for Children

Advocate Aurora Health,

Families USA,

American Public Health Association (APHA),

National Partnership for Women & Families,

Ancient Song Doula Services,

FPA Women's Health,

American Association of Birth Centers,

March for Moms,

Center for Reproductive Rights, and

Virginia Premier.